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CRESCAS ON THE PROBLEM OF DIVINE ATTRIBUTES

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CHAPTER II CRESCAS'S CRITICISM OF MAIMONIDES.

POSITIVE attributes, contends Crescas, cannot be inadmissible, for that would reduce the accomplished metaphysician in his knowledge of the divine being to the same level with the novice. But that the knowledge of the divine is commensurate with one's moral and intellectual perfections is generally admitted.⁶¹ True, Maimonides had forestalled that objection by declaring that though there can be no rising scale in the positive knowledge of God there can still be one in the discovery of additional negations. His explanation, however, is inadequate, for the augmentation of negative attributes cannot mark an increase in knowledge. True knowledge must be scientific and demonstrative, a principle which had been advanced by Aristotle⁶² and upheld by Maimonides.⁶³ It is not the acquisition of new facts, but rather the invention of new proofs that knowledge grows by. Now, that positive attributes are to be rejected is demonstrable by a simple argument based upon the proposition of divine absolute existence—an argument which can be easily mastered even

⁶¹ Cf. *Moreh*, I, 59.

⁶² Cf. *Physics*, I, 1.

⁶³ Cf. *Moreh*, I, 55.

by those uninitiated in philosophy. And once one has mastered demonstration of the divine absolute existence one can prove the inadmissibility of any positive attribute that may come up. Any additional negation merely involves a new application of the identical argument, and thus adds nothing to the content of knowledge. Hence Crescas asks with added emphasis: Since the divine essence is unknowable, and if you also deny the existence of essential attributes, how can there be a rising scale in the knowledge of the divine being?⁶⁴

Again, the inadmissibility of divine attributes is irreconcilable with tradition. If the divine qualities are all identical with the divine essence, then in the prayer of Moses, to be shown God's glory,⁶⁵ what the prophet had asked for was to attain the knowledge of God's essence. But it is highly improbable that Moses should have been ignorant of the fact that the divine essence was unknowable. Furthermore, tradition has differentiated the Ineffable Name from other divine names in that the former refers to the divine nature itself, whereas the latter are derivative of His actions. Now, since the divine essence is unknowable the Ineffable Name could not have been a designation thereof. And if you also say that no essential attributes are existent, then it could not as well designate any divine attribute. What part of the divine nature could it then have referred to? You could not say that it designated God's absolute existence or some of His negative attributes, for if that were the case, the meaning of the Ineffable Name would not have been kept in secrecy. Hence, positive attributes are not inadmissible.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Cf. *Or Adonai*, I, III, 3, p. 23 a.

⁶⁵ Cf. *Or Adonai*, I, III, 3, p. 23 b.

⁶⁶ Cf. Exodus 33. 18.

Nor are relative attributes inadmissible. If you say that predication expressing temporal, spatial, or some other external relations of God, though not implying a plurality in His essence, are inadmissible because all such relations, if real, imply similarity, why then is the affirmation of actions admissible? Actions, to be sure, when conceived as emanative from the divine essence, co-existing *with* Him always in energy and never *within* Him as a mere capacity, do not by themselves imply the inherence of external, imperfect qualities. On that account, Maimonides is perfectly consistent in rejecting positive attributes and admitting actions. But still actions are external relations. However they are taken, actions express some relation between God and the external, created reality, a relation which, like transient qualities, is changeable and transitional, even though unlike the latter it does not imply changeability and transitionality in the essences of the related objects. For even though we may explain the apparent changeability in the divine actions as due to the material objects operated upon rather than to the operative agent, those actions, when not viewed as dynamic forces, but as external static relations between the agent and its object, must of necessity like all external relations, and especially like the relation between transient agents and their objects, be changeable and transitional. That actions present a phase of external relativity is an indisputable assumption. In fact, as we have already pointed out, Maimonides stands alone in differentiating between actions and external relations and separating them into two distinct classes of predicables. Most of the philosophers had included actions in the class of external relations, permitting the use of the latter as well as that of the former. And so,

since Maimonides prohibits external relations on account of similarity, why should he not for the same reason prohibit actions? ⁶⁷

In his discussion of external relations, Maimonides especially mentions the two classes enumerated by Aristotle; ⁶⁸ first, the relation of reciprocity, and, second, the rotation of degree of comparison. The former is designated by him by the term *הצטיפות*, Arabic *اخصافه*, and the latter by the term *יחסם*, Arabic *نسبية*. Both of these kinds are inadmissible. In rejecting the former kind, he states its reason that it is characteristic of such correlatives to be reciprocally convertible. The contention of this phrase has been variously interpreted by the commentators, and, as usual,

⁶⁷ Cf. *Or Adonai*, I, III, 3, p. 23 a. ‘Since attributes by which a thing is described in its relation to something else, which implies non-existence, are inadmissible with respect to God, as e. g. the transition of an object from a state of potentiality to that of actuality [*Moreh*, II, 55], how then does he allow the use of attributes which only describe the actions of an object, as e. g. doing, acting, creating; since these, too, imply non-existence; for before the deed, act or creation, the agent was potential and afterwards became actual.’

The meaning of this argument had been misunderstood by Abraham Shalom and Isaac Abrabanel. They interpreted the argument as follows: Since essential attributes are to be rejected on account of the implication of transition from potentiality to actuality, why should not actions be rejected for the same reason. And so both of them point out Crescas’s error in overlooking the distinction drawn by Maimonides himself between essential attributes and actions. (Cf. *נווה שלם*, מ' י"ב, *דרוש א'*, פ"ד) הנה תחביר ממה שאמר הרב שאין תואר הפעולות לומר فعل ועשה יותר שהוא בבח וישב בפועל, כמו שאמר חסידא ר' י"ח הנזכר.

Cf. also Abrabanel’s commentary on the *Moreh*, I, 55. The rendering of this argument by Dr. Julius Wolfsohn (*Der Einfluss Gazali’s auf Chisdai Crescas*, p. 38, note 2) is uncritical. Cf. also Kaufmann, *Attributenlehre*, p. 416, note 85.

⁶⁸ Cf. *Organon, Categories*, ch. 7.

the ancients like Proflat Duran, Asher Crescas, Shem-tob, and Abrabanel had come nearer the truth than the moderns, like Solomon Maimon, Munk, and Friedländer. From the *Organon*⁶⁹ we may gather the meaning of the statement to be as follows. Correlations are reciprocal not because of a reciprocal relation existing between two objects in reality, but because terms by which the related objects are designated are mutually implicative. Thus, ‘slave’ and ‘master’ are reciprocally correlative, but ‘John’ and ‘master’ are not so, though in reality John may be the slave of the master. Likewise, ‘wing’ and ‘winged creature’ are reciprocally correlative, but ‘wing’ and ‘bird’ are not, though the bird is a winged creature. Suppose now that the term ‘slave’ were used homonymously, in a sense absolutely divorced from its original meaning, would it still be correlative with ‘master’? In other words, must a reciprocal correlation be so in reality as well as in name? Maimonides seems to think that the two conditions are necessary. Reciprocally correlative terms must be mutually implicative in name and mutually interdependent in reality. Consequently he maintains that by whatever term you designate God, that term taken as it must be in an absolute sense is perforce a homonym, and therefore no reciprocal relation can exist between God and other beings. Thus, even if God is called the First Cause or Principle, unlike all other causes and principles, it is absolutely independent of its effect and consequence. ‘For’, says Maimonides, ‘it is characteristic of two correlatives by reciprocation to be mutually convertible, and God being necessary existence and everything besides being possible existence, there can be no such correlation between them.’ But, argues Crescas,

⁶⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

while it is true that the divine existence, viewed as mere existence, is absolute and independent of anything else, when however it is viewed as causative existence it is because that in its causative nature it is even in reality dependent upon the existence of effects emanating from its essence. His existence is necessary because it is not antecedent by any prior cause, but it is causative because it is creative. The fact that His causativity is dependent upon the existence of its effects does not detract from the necessity of His own existence. For necessary existence means nothing but the absence of efficient causation. And thus while the divine existence is absolute, the divine causation is not.⁷⁰

Furthermore, if time be eternal, God would share with it in the common property of eternity. To understand the full significance of this criticism we must first cite Aristotle's

⁷⁰ Cf. *Or Adonai*, I, III, 3, p. 23 b. 'It is difficult to comprehend the statement made by Maimonides, namely, that there can be no perfect relation between God and His creatures on account of the condition that objects which are correlative must be reciprocally convertible. For, as a matter of fact, God must inevitably be conceived as Cause and Principle. Since a cause is so with respect to its effects and a principle likewise with respect to what follows from it, it is therefore evident that in this respect there exists some relation between them.'

I take this argument of Crescas to be an application of Algazali's contention that necessary existence only implies the negation of prior causes. Algazali's contention, as will be seen, reappears again in Crescas's exposition of his own theory of Attributes (cf. *infra*, ch. III, note 110). In this argument, therefore, Crescas is reasoning from his own premise. It is, truly speaking, not an argument against Maimonides. Of the same nature, as will be pointed out, is Crescas's next argument from time.

This underlying postulate of Crescas's argument seems to have been overlooked by Abraham Shalom (cf. נוה שלום מ' י"ב ד"א פ"ג) and Abrabanel (cf. פירוש חמורה ח"א פ' נ"ב), cf. also Kaufmann, *Attributenlehre*, p. 389, note 47, and Julius Wolfsohn, *Der Einfluss Gazali's auf Chisdai Crescas*, p. 38, note 1.

definition of the phrase ‘being in time’. To be in time may mean two things, one, to co-exist *with* time, and, the other, to exist *in* time and be measured by it.⁷¹ The second meaning, however, is rejected by Aristotle as being untrue. When, therefore, Maimonides queries whether there be any relation between God and time, he simply means whether it could be affirmed that God has existence *in* time, to which his answer is in the negative, for since time is consequent to motion, and motion to magnitude,⁷² an inextended being cannot be said to have temporal existence in that sense. But the question is now raised by Crescas: Why cannot temporal relation be affirmed of God in the sense of co-existence *with* time, or to be when time is? The relation would then not be, as in the first case, of the dependence of God upon time, but rather of the commonality of eternal co-existence of two independent entities, God and time. The hypothesis of eternal time, to be sure, is rejected by Maimonides, but that is on quite other grounds, and not because time, were it eternal, could not share with God the property of eternity.⁷³

Maimonides’ rejection of temporal relation in the case of God is still less justifiable ‘in view of what has been said in the second part in refutation of the premise that time is an accident consequent to motion’.⁷⁴ Herein Crescas is pitting his own definition of time with all its corollaries against that of Maimonides, rather than criticizing the latter

⁷¹ Cf. *Physics*, IV, 12, § 8.

⁷² Cf. *ibid.*, IV, 12, § 6.

⁷³ Cf. *Or Adonai*, I, III, 3, p. 23 b. ‘Likewise with regard to his statement that there is no relation between God and time, even if we admit that time is one of the conditions of motion, the latter of which is a condition of corporeal objects, there can still be a relation and similarity between God and time with respect to eternity, especially if we assume that time is eternal.’

⁷⁴ Cf. *ibid.*

from his own premises. Following Aristotle, Maimonides defines time as an accident adjoined to motion, and to be in time is circumscribed by two conditions. In the first place, the temporal object must have motion,⁷⁵ and in the second place, it must be comprehended by the time,⁷⁶ thus not co-existing with the whole of the time, but only with a part thereof. Therefore, the eternal translunary spheres, according to Aristotle, which are endowed with rotary motion, thus satisfying only one of the conditions, are said to be in time only by accident. The eternal immovable Intelligences, however, satisfying neither of the conditions, are not in time at all. And so God has no temporal relation. Though God is said to have existed prior to the world, the priority referred to is causal rather than temporal, since prior to the emergence of matter there had been no time. But Crescas defines time as an accident of both motion and rest, meaning by the latter some positive entity and not a mere absence of motion.⁷⁷ Time, therefore, being independent of motion, is likewise independent of matter, and had existed even before the creation of the universe. And so, the immovable eternal beings as well as God may be said to have existence in time.

Finally,⁷⁸ the divine negative attributes cannot form a privative judgement; they must of necessity form a negative judgement, thus involving an indirect affirmation. Privative judgements are possible only in the case where the subject belongs to a different universe of discourse from that which the predicate belongs to. When we say that 'a mathematical point is not red', the judgement must truly be

⁷⁵ Cf. *Physics*, IV, 12, § 11.

⁷⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, IV, 12, § 10.

⁷⁷ *Or Adonai*, I, I, XVI, p. 11 a, and I, II, XI, p. 19 a.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, I, III, III, p. 25 a.

privative, denying red as well as all its correlatives, ‘not red’ thus meaning colourless, because in the universe of mathematical points there is no colour. But in the proposition ‘God is not ignorant’, while we negate not only human ignorance but also human knowledge, still, according to Maimonides, we affirm of God some knowledge which is identical with the divine essence, and which has no known relation with human knowledge. Thus the negation of knowledge in the case of God cannot be an absolute privation of knowledge; it must only be a negation of human knowledge which indirectly implies the affirmation of divine knowledge. Since divine knowledge is thus affirmed by the negation of human knowledge, the two must have some kind of relation, however vague and inarticulate. Divine knowledge, says Crescas, must accordingly be ‘some kind of apprehension’. Now, let us designate that ‘some kind of apprehension’ by the letter *X*, and see whereabouts it would lead us.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Cf. *Or Adonai*, I, III, 3, p. 25a. ‘It is quite evident that when we attribute to God knowledge and power in a particular sense, meaning by knowledge the negation of its counterpart, namely, *human knowledge* [literally, ignorance], and by power, the negation of *human power* [literally, impotence], either of these two terms ascribed to Him must of necessity imply something positive. For even though His knowledge is as different from our knowledge as His essence differs from our essence, still that which is implied in the negation of *human knowledge* [literally, ignorance] must be some kind of comprehension or perception. That the negation of *human knowledge* [literally, ignorance] must imply [the affirmation of] something positive and cognoscible, is beyond dispute, since [being] the counterpart of that [negated] *human knowledge* [literally, ignorance], [it] must indicate a certain [positive] thing, namely, some kind of perception.’

I have translated the term סותר by ‘counterpart’ rather than by ‘contrary’, throughout these passages. I have likewise taken the terms סכלות and לאות to mean respectively human knowledge and human ignorance in general, which in contrast with divine knowledge and power,

First, what would be the relation of that *X* to the divine essence? It cannot be accidental nor essential to it, since both are debarred by Maimonides. It must, therefore, be identical with the essence. But *X*, as we have said, is not entirely unknowable; for so much is known of it that it is 'some kind of apprehension'. The question is now, Is it co-extensive with the essence or not? In the former case, the essence would have to be knowable; and in the latter, the essence would have to be composed of a knowable and unknowable part.⁸⁰

Furthermore, as *X* stands for the divine correlative of human knowledge, so would *Y* stand for the divine correlative of human power. Now, since human knowledge and power are different, *X* and *Y* will have to be different.

are nothing but ignorance and impotence at their best. For I think that Crescas understood the term 'negative attributes', used by Maimonides, in the same sense as I interpreted it in ch. I. According to my rendering and interpretation of this argument as well as of those that follow, the objections raised against them by Abraham Shalom in his *Neveh Shalom* are ill-founded. (Cf. *Neveh Shalom*, XII, I, IV; Jöel, *Don Chasdai Crescas*, p. 31; cf. also *Ez Hayyim* by Aaron ben Elijah the Karaite, ch. 71.)

⁸⁰ Cf. *Or Adonai*, I, III, 3, p. 25 a. 'Therefore I say that if this comprehension and whatever it implies were not something positive and essential to the Blessed One, it would have to be His essence itself, inasmuch as it could not be an accidental attribute, since God can bear no relation whatsoever to accidents. Now, if it were His essence itself, it would give rise to either of these two absurdities. First, were His essence to include nothing but what we understand by the term comprehension, His essence would then have to be knowable. Second, were His essence to include something besides what we understand by the term comprehension, it would then have to be composed of two parts, namely, that which we understand by the term comprehension and that of which we have no knowledge at all. Either of these two consequences is absolutely absurd. That the divine essence cannot be an object of our knowledge, is well known to every novice in Metaphysics; and that His essence cannot likewise be composed of two parts is due to the fact that God would in that case have one possible existence.' (Cf. *Neveh Shalom*, *ibid.*)

Hence, if these attributes were identical with God's essence, His essence would be composite.

Finally, suppose, however, that *X* is absolutely unrelated with human knowledge, and that is not even 'some kind of apprehension'. The proposition 'God is knowing', which according to Maimonides means that 'God is not ignorant', would, therefore, be the exclusion of human knowledge and the lack thereof without at the same time affirming divine knowledge.⁸¹ But the judgement could not be privative, for though the divine knowledge is absolutely unrelated to the human knowledge, and cannot therefore be indirectly affirmed by the negation of the latter, there is, however, an absolutely unique divine knowledge which cannot be denied in the same way as we can deny mathematical colour. And so, negative attributes form negative judgements. But according to Maimonides negative attributes mean that God neither possesses those attributes as they are stated, nor their opposites. This, however, is contrary to the law of excluded middle.⁸²

⁸¹ Cf. *ibid.* 'Again, it has been shown, that the terms knowledge and power, when applied to God, must mean something positive and cognoscible, since in the case of negating [of God] either *human knowledge* [literally, ignorance] or *human power* [literally, impotence] we must understand [indirectly to affirm of Him] something [positive], namely, either the [divine] counterpart of *human knowledge* [literally, ignorance] or the [divine] counterpart of *human power* [literally, impotence]. But it is clear that whatever is meant by the [divine] counterpart of *human knowledge* [literally, ignorance] is not identical with whatever is meant by the [divine] counterpart of *human power* [literally, impotence]. Consequently the meaning of the one must differ from that of the other. Hence it follows that neither of them can be taken as identical with the divine essence, for in that case His essence would be composed of different parts.' (Cf. *Neveh Shalom*, *ibid.*).

⁸² Cf. *ibid.* 'Again, if his conclusion with regard to the denial of essential attributes were true . . . it would be impossible to affirm of God any positive implication of those attributes, inasmuch as the denial thereof is not because we are ignorant of any of His essential attributes but because

From his arguments against Maimonides' theory of attributes, Crescas passes over to a discussion of the relation between essence and existence. In its origin, among the Arabs and Jews, the problem of essence and existence was much simpler than in its later development among the Schoolmen. To the latter the problem presented itself in the following form. Assuming the presence of a distinction between essence and existence within actual beings they ask, What does that distinction consist in? ⁸³ The various answers given to the question ran parallel to the solutions offered to the problem of universals, real, conceptual, or nominal. This evolved form of the problem, however, bears only a remote resemblance to what seems to have been its nucleus, namely, the controversy of Avicenna and Averroes. To these Arabic thinkers the problem of essence and existence presented itself in the form whether existence is an accidental or an essential universal, and it originated in the following manner :

That which is divided into the ten Categories is designated by Aristotle by the word *rò õv*. The corresponding Arabic term is *الموجود*, a passive participle from a root meaning 'to find' (*وجد*). In the Arabic language that

He does not possess any. Thus, God will have to be deprived of whatever we understand by comprehension or power. Neither of these can, therefore, be ascribed to Him either as parts of His essence or as essential attributes. But as it is evident that any kind of ignorance or impotence [i. e. human knowledge and power] must be negated of Him, it follows that He is negated both contraries or opposites, namely, knowledge [i. e. divine] and ignorance [i. e. human knowledge], power [i. e. divine], and impotence [i. e. human power]. But that is most absurd and inane (cf. *Neveh Shalom*, *ibid.*; Joël, *Don Chasdai Crescas*, p. 31; Kaufmann, *Attributenlehre*, p. 478, note 162; Julius Wolfsohn, *Einfluss Algazalis*, p. 40).

⁸³ Cf. R. P. Kleutgen, *La Philosophie scholastique*, vol. III, chap. II; M. De Wulf, *Scholasticism Old and New*, pp. 108-9.

passive participle joined to a noun *A* in the nominative case forms a proposition meaning ‘*A* is existent’. Now, in this proposition, it is clear, that the existence affirmed of *A* must be accidental to it, for were it identical with the essence of *A*, argues Avicenna, ‘*A* is existent’ would mean ‘*A* is *A*’. Existence is thus an accident. ‘Being’, τὸ ὅν, or الْمُجَوَّد, which is divided into the ten categories, is therefore resolvable into ‘that which is’, having itself existence superadded to its essence, and so is existence accidental to the essence of all the ten categories. And, like all accidents, existence is applied to different subjects in unequal sense. Meaning independent reality outside the mind, existence is primarily applied to substances which are self-existent, and through these to the accidents of quality and quantity, and through qualitatively or quantitatively modified substances, it is also applied to the residual accidents.⁸⁴ As the com-

⁸⁴ According to Isaac Albalag (commentary on Algazali's *Intentions*) the problem of essence and existence and unity had its origin in two apparently contradictory statements which he alleges to be found in the works of Aristotle. In the Metaphysics (IV, 2) Aristotle identifies being (τὸ ὅν) and unity (τὸ ἕν) with the essence of the subject of which they are predicated. In *De Anima*, however, says Albalag, being and unity are stated to be accidental to essence.

אבלCMD טעה בזה, לפי שלקח המצוין הנאמר על עניין הראשון, והוא אשר אלו כיוון אריסטו בספר הנפש תחת המצוין הנאמר על עניין השני, והוא אשר כיוון במה שאחר הטע (צחיק אלבלג, פרוש על הכותנות, אלחיות, מ"א).

I was, however, unable to identify Albalag's reference in *De Anima*. In *De Anima*, II, 1, 7, the only place in that book where being and unity are discussed, there is no indication that Aristotle had considered them as accidents.

Cf. also Shemtob's commentary on the *Moreh*, I, 57.

In my exposition of the reason that had led Avicenna to consider existence as an accident, I have followed Averroes. (Cf. *Destruction of the Destruction*, Disputation VII; *Epitome of the Metaphysics*, I. The latter passage is quoted by Munk, *Guide*, vol. I, ch. 57, p. 231. Paraphrases of

position of essence and existence, which is now assumed in every being, must necessarily be occasioned by a preceding cause, that cause itself, in order to avoid an infinite this passage of Averroes is found in almost every commentary on the *Moreh*; cf. also *infra*, note 86).

The following observation on the meaning of the Hebrew words מטען, מטעןות, מטעןות, may be of some interest. In early Hebrew translations from the Arabic the terms *ישות* (being) and *מציאות* (existence), were synonymous, both contrasted with *מהות* (quiddity), cf. Hebrew translation of Alzazali's *Intentions*, Part II, Metaphysics.

זה יראה מה שיברנוו קדם מפני הישות אשר הוא כליזה מהמציאות
בבלתי מהות.

In the Hebrew translation of Aegidius de Colonna's *De Esse et Essentia*, however, the term *מציאות* is used as synonymous with *מהות*, both of which are contrasted with *ישות*.

א"כ מבואר הוא שהישות הוא דבר אחר מהמציאות או מהות בלבד
(p. 96).

The following explanation seems to me to be quite plausible.

The Arabs, and after them the Jews, rendered the Greek *oὐσία* and *τὸν ὄντα*, both from a root meaning 'to be', by وجود (מציאות) and وجود (מהות), which, derived from the root 'to find', usually mean 'existence' and 'existent', respectively. In addition to 'existence', they coined the term מהות (matter), that is, 'quiddity'. 'Existence' was to them the accident of 'quiddity'. And so even when *oὐσία* and *τὸν ὄντα* are translated literally by קון (הווים) or קיין (הווים), from 'to be', the latter are considered as synonymous with 'existence' and therefore accidents of 'quiddity'. According to Averroes, as we shall see, the distinction of 'existence' and 'quiddity' originally sprang from that inaccurate Arabic translation of the term *oὐσία*.

Now, the Scholastics used the term *essentia* among other terms for the Greek *oὐσία*. Adopting from the Arabs the *quidditas* they used it synonymously with *essentia*. Again, the Arabic موجود (מציאות) became *esse* which, as is well known, is used by the Schoolmen in the sense of *existentialia*. Likewise, the Arabic موجود (מהות) became *ens*. And just as the Arabs and Jews used to speak of the distinction between 'existence' and 'quiddity' so they speak of the distinction between *esse* and *essentia seu quidditas* or *ens* and *essentia seu quidditas*.

Thus while the Hebrew מטען and the Latin *essentia* are both originally translations from the Greek *oὐσία*, in the historical development of ideas

chain of cause and effect, we must assume to be free from that composition. Thus Avicenna concludes that in God there is no distinction of essence and existence.⁸⁵

they have drifted away far apart from each other. *Essentia* is identical with *מוחות*, which is quite the opposite of *מציאות*, and is identical with *esse*, which is the antithesis of *essentia*.

Some of the Hebrew translators from the Latin saw that point clearly. Thus the translator of Thomas Aquinas renders the title of the latter's *De ente et essentia* by מואמר בנטמצא ובמוחות (quoted by Steinschneider, *Uebersetzungen*, § 295, 5). He likewise translates literally *essentia* by *היות* and *ens* by *הוּא*, giving, however, for the latter its traditional Hebrew equivalent *נתמצא*.

שאליה א/ אם שם *היות*, וכלשונם *אישנסיא*, הוא ל Koh מושם *החות*, ר"ל, *הנתמצא* ובלשונם *אנש*, במוחות ובמציאות מטומחש. (quoted *ibid.*)

The translator of Aegidius, however, renders the title *De esse et essentia* by מאמיר *הנתמצא* והמציאות. This, as we have seen, is inaccurate. For *ens* is *נתמצא*, and *esse* is *מציאות*. Again, while both *essentia* and *מציאות* are translations from the Greek *οὐσία*, their meanings are quite different. He likewise renders the phrase *essentia seu quidditas* by *המציאות או המוחות*, the first part of which is wrong again for the same reason. It should be observed that the phrase *seu quidditas*, which the translator had in his Latin text, is not found in the Venice edition of 1503 of Aegidius's *De esse et essentia*.

⁸⁵ There is a very important question which I wish to raise at this point. In the literature dealing with the problem of essence and existence we find two different formulas which are invariably used in affirming the absence of any distinction between essence and existence in the divine being.

The first formula employed by Maimonides and some of his commentators states that in God *essence and existence are identical*. The following quotations will illustrate it :

תהייה מציאותו עצמו ואמתתו, ועצמו מציאותו (מוריה, ח"א, פ' נ"ג)
אחר שששי' הוא מהויב המציאות, וממציאותו ומהותו דבר אחד (שם
טוב, פרוש על המורה שם).
לפי שמציאותו ומהותו אחד . . . אבל מציאותו הוא מהותו (אפורין,
שם, פ' נ"ח).

הנה הם מסכימים על הנמצא הנאמר על האלהות יה' שאין דבר יוצא
עצמו (אור ה', מ"א, ב"ג, פ"א).

In opposition to this view, Averroes maintains that existence is identical with essence. The two are indistinguishable even in thought. Anything thought of is thought

The second formula used by Avicenna and Algazali states that God is *existence without essence added to it*. To illustrate:

ולכן היה הילה הראשונה מציאות בלי מהות נספה (אלגזי, בנות
אלחיות, מ"א).
בבטול אמרם שהראשון הוא נמצא פשוט בלי מהות (הנ"ל, הפלת
הפילוסופים, שאלה ח').

The question may now be raised whether these two different formulas are advisedly used, implying two distinct theories, or not. For several reasons it would seem that the two formulas do not imply two different theories. First, as far as we know, there is no record of any controversy between Maimonides and Avicenna and Algazali as to whether in God essence and existence are identical or He is existence without essence. Maimonides is generally believed to follow Avicenna and Algazali on that point, even though they use different formulas. Second, from the following quotations it may be conclusively deduced that the two formulas are used indiscriminately.

והש"י אמרו בו שהוא מציאות ולא מהות, לפי שהישות והמהות הוא
אחד בו (קרישקען, פירוש על המורה ח"א, פ' נ"ז).
ואינו מחייב מוה שなしונו הייחודית אשר הוא מהותו, שהוא
מציאות בלי מהות נספּת, וכמו שאמר אבוחמד אין מציאות בלי מהות כי
אם לאל (הנ"ל, שם, פ' נ"ח).

But the following passage from Isaac Albalag's commentary on Algazali's *Intentions of the Philosophers*, would on the other hand indicate quite clearly that Albalag had taken the latter's formula that God is *existence without essence* quite literally.

לפיכך אמר שהילה הראשונה מציאות בלי מהות, וזה תימה גדוֹלָה
אין שלל לעילה הראשונה מהות שאינו דבר נספּת על העצם וחיביך לו
המציאות שהוא מקרה (אלבלג, בנות, אלחיות, מ"א).

Again, from the following passage in Averroes' *Destruction of the Destruction*, Disputation VIII, it would also seem that this was a point at issue between Algazali and Averroes as to the interpretation of Avicenna's theory, the former maintaining that it meant that God is *existence without essence*, the latter that in God *essence and existence are identical*.

אמר ב"ר . . . זה הפרק כלו מטעה, כי האנשים לא יניזו לראשו

of as existent. This essential existence, to be sure, cannot be affirmed as the predicate of a subject in a logical proposition without involving tautology. But conceptual existences may have counterparts in reality, or may not have them. The idea of God and angels, for instance, has something in reality to correspond with it. The idea of centaurs on the other hand, though likewise involving existence, has nothing outside the mind to correspond with it. The former idea is, therefore, a true one (ἀληθής—صادق—צדוק), the latter idea is a false one (ψευδής—كافוב—كافוב). For truth is the correspondence of what is conceived with what is perceived. To express this distinction between a true and a false idea we either affirm or deny of a thing its existence outside the mind. The test of such existence is knowledge, direct or indirect. Of a true idea we, therefore, affirm that it is directly perceived or otherwise known to agree with reality. Now, in the Arabic language, says

מציאות ולא מהות ולא מהות בלא מציאות ; ואם האמינו שהמציאות
במורכב תואר נספּ על עצמותו, ושהה התאר אמן קנו מופעל,
והאמינו במה שהוא פשוט שזה התאר לו אין נספּ על מהות, ושהוא
אין לו מהות מתחלף למציאות, לא שהוא אין לו מהות כלל כמו שבנה
הוא כלל דבריו בסתיו רוחם (הפלת ההפלה, שאלה ח').

That these two formulas represent two distinct theories, would also seem to follow from this passage of Thomas Aquinas's *De ente et essentia*. ‘Aliquid enim est, sicut Deus, cuius essentia est ipsum suum esse; et ideo inveniuntur *aliqui philosophi* dicentes quod Deus non habet essentiam, quia essentia eius non est aliud quam esse eius.’ As to who the *aliqui philosophi* were, Cajetan identifies them with the Platonists, a term, as has been observed, used by him loosely to indicate some gnostic sect (cf. *De ente et essentia*, ed. Émile Bruneteau, Paris, 1914, p. 114, note 1). It is more probable that Thomas refers there to Algazali. Professor Maurice De Wulf, however, was kind enough to advise me that in his opinion the phrase *aliqui philosophi* refers to some contemporary teachers in the University of Paris and not necessarily to some well-known philosophers.

Averroes, the same root 'وَجْد' to find', which signifies the essential existence, means also to find out the presence of something by means of the senses or of the intellect. Thus 'God is existent' means that God is perceived or known to have objective reality corresponding to our subjective idea of Him. In the proposition 'centaurs are not existent' we likewise mean to deny the perception of centaurs to agree with our conception thereof. In either case, however, ideal existence is identical with essence.⁸⁶

The same difference of opinion between Avicenna and Averroes recurs with regard to the attribute of unity.

⁸⁶ Cf. Narboni's Commentary on Algazali's *Intentions*, Metaphysics, Part I.

וכתב ابن רشد, זה לשונו: טעות ابن סינא, שהוא בעבור שראה שם הנמצא מורה על החזק בדיבור הערבי והוא אשר מורה על החזק מורה על מקרה בלבד, אבל גם באמותה על מושכל מן המושכלות השניות, רצוני לומר, הרבריות, חשב שכאשר עשאוו המעתיקים אמנים יורה על זה העניין, ואין העניין כן. אבל אמנים כונו בו המעתיקים שיורו בו על אשר יורה עליו שם העצמות והרבבות. וכך באר זה האוניצ'ר בספר האותיות, וידע שאחת מסכבות הטמעות הנפולות בה הוא שם הנמצא הוא בתנועה נגזר, והנגזר יורה על מקרה, אבל הוא בראש הלשון נגזר, אלא שהמעתקים אחר שלא מצאו בלשון הערב תיבה מורה על זה העניין, אשר היו הקודמים חולקים אותו אל העצם והמקרה, ואל הכה והפעול, רצוני לומר, תיבה היא המשל ראשון, והוא עליו קצתם בשם הנמצא, לא על שיבון ממנה עניין הנוגרת, ויורה על מקרה, אבל עניין אשר יורה עליו שם העצמות, והוא כל דבר הזה, והוא שם מלאכותי, לא לשוני ע"ב.

But Aristotle himself, as is well known, distinguishes four different usages of the term *τὸ δόν*, two of which correspond to those mentioned by Averroes, namely, (1) in the sense of truth and falsehood (*Τὸ δὸν λέγεται τὸ μὲν κατὰ συμβεβηκός*), (2) that which is divided into the categories ("Ἐτι τὸ εἶναι σημαίνει καὶ τὸ ἔστιν ὅτι ἀληθές, τὸ δὲ μὴ εἶναι ὅτι οὐκ ἀληθής ἀλλὰ ψεύδος") (cf. Metaphysics, IV, 7, V, 2; Grote, *Aristotle*, vol. I, chap. III). Thus it is not altogether the translator's fault that Avicenna confused the two meanings of the term (see the interpretation of Averroes' criticism given by Munk, *Guide*, vol. I, p. 231).

Here, again, for similar reasons Avicenna maintains that, like existence, unity is only accidental to essence. Averroes, on the contrary, maintains that unity is identical with essence, but distinguishing between absolute and numerical unity, he admits the latter to be accidental, and it is this accidental kind of unity that is always referred to in propositions affirming unity.

Among Jewish philosophers, Maimonides and his immediate disciples⁸⁷ followed Avicenna. All later Jewish thinkers accepted the view of Averroes.⁸⁸ Having a new theory of his own, Crescas undertakes to expose the untenability of both the old systems.

Whatever the meaning of existence with respect to creatures may be, contends Crescas, with respect to God it is generally admitted, by both the Avicennean and the Averroesean groups, that existence is identical with the divine essence. Hence it must be inferred that they all interpret the attribute of existence homonymously, for as there is no relation between the divine and the created essence, so there cannot be any relation between their

⁸⁷ Cf. *Drei Abhandlungen von Josef b. Jehuda* (יוסק ב"ר יהודה) (*תלמיד הרמב"ם*), edited by Moritz Löwy, Berlin, 1879, Hebrew text, p. 15.

⁸⁸ Cf. commentaries on the *Moreh*, as well as the commentaries of Narboni and Albalag on Algazali's *Intentions*. Cf. also Albo's *Ikkarim*, II, ch. I. Narboni, in his commentary on the *Intentions*, after quoting at length Averroes' arguments against Avicenna, adds the following remark: 'I have dwelt rather too long on this subject, because I have noticed that the savant, our Master Moses [i. e. Maimonides], following Algazali and Avicenna, had begun one of his chapters by saying that "existence is an accident superadded to the existent being". Would that that statement had not existed.'

והארכתי בבאור זה; למה שראיתי הוכח רבינו משה נמשך בספריו
אחר דעת ابو חמד ואבן סינה בות, עד שהחחיל בפרק מפרקיו, המציגות
מקרה קרה לנמצא,ומי יתן ולא נמצא.

existences. Consequently, queries Crescas, 'Would that I could conceive what is the significance of the term existence when applied to God, for our affirmation that God is existent, in which the latter term is not different from the former, is tantamount to our saying that God is God'.⁸⁹ Two inaccuracies of this argument of Crescas must not be passed over unnoticed. In the first place the inference that the homonymous interpretation of the term existence must follow its identification with the divine essence, is erroneous. Gersonides, for instance, follows Averroes in the identification of essence and existence, and still interprets the latter ambiguously, according to the distinction of priority and posteriority.⁹⁰ In the second place, in interpreting existence homonymously Maimonides circumvents the objection of tautology by taking it as an emphasis of the negation of non-existence.⁹¹

But the objection may be urged even with regard to created existences if we accept the view of Averroes and his followers, who consider existence to be nothing but the essence. For, according to this view, the proposition 'man is existent' or 'white is existent' would be equivalent to saying 'man is man' or 'white is white'.⁹² This criticism is neither original nor irrefutable. In fact, it is the very same argument that had been advanced by Algazali in support of the Avicennean theory of the distinction between existence and essence.⁹³ Again, Averroes's refutation

⁸⁹ *Or Adonai*, I, III, 1, p. 21 b-22 a.

⁹⁰ Cf. *Milhamot*, V, III, 12, p. 46 b, and III, 3, p. 23 a.

⁹¹ Cf. *Moreh*, I, 58.

⁹² *Or Adonai*, I, III, 1, p. 22 a.

⁹³ Cf. Algazali's *Intentions*, Metaphysics: In refutation of the view that existence and essence are identical, he says: 'This is refutable on two grounds: first, when we say the substance is existent it is evidently a proposition conjoined of two terms. Now if the existence of the substance

thereof, based upon a distinction in the use of the term existence, was well known and had been quoted by all the commentators on the *Moreh*.⁹⁴

The view held by Avicenna that existence is only accidental to the essence, says Crescas, is still less tenable. The term accident had been used by Avicenna in two senses, a general and a specific.⁹⁵ In its general sense the term is applied to everything which requires a subject of inhesion. In its specific sense, however, it is applied only to those that require a subject of inhesion, and of which the subject of inhesion is independent, as, for instance, *white* and *cloth*. Form, therefore, though an accident in the general meaning, having no existence apart from matter, is not an accident in the specific meaning of the term, since Matter in its turn has no subsistence without Form. And so Form is included among the four Substances. It is with reference to these two meanings of the term accident, if I am not mistaken, that Crescas urges the next two arguments against Avicenna's accidental interpretation of

were the essence of it, our statement would assert that substance is substance.'

... זה נפסד משני פנים, אחד מהם, שאמרנו העצם נמצא בבודו מהוחר מובן, והוא היה מציאות העצם עין העצם, היה כאמור העצם עצם.

⁹⁴ Cf. *supra*, notes 84 and 86.

⁹⁵ Cf. Algazali's *Intentions*, Metaphysics, I. He divides there existence (מציאות) into two classes; one, which needs an abode (מישב) as accidents (מקרים), and another, which has no need for an abode. Those which need an abode are again divided into two classes: one, where the abode is independent of the accident, and, another, where the abode is dependent upon the accident. In the former case the accident bears the name accident (מרקחה), whereas the abode is called the subject (נושא). In the latter case the accident is called *Form* (צורה) whereas the abode is called *hyle* (היל). In fact the inclusion of the Form among the Substances is opposed by the Mutakallehim, who consider it as a mere accident dependent upon its abode (cf. *Moreh*, I, 73, proposition 8).

existence. Assuming at first that by interpreting existence as an accident Avicenna uses the term accident in its specific sense, Crescas attempts to reduce that view to an absurdity.⁹⁶ If anything, said to be existent, has its existence added to its essence, that existence, which we may designate as primary, being merely an accident, cannot be self-subsistent. In compliance with the definition of accident it must have existence in something else. Thus accidental primary existence will have accidental secondary existence. By analogous reasoning the secondary existence will need to have tertiary, and so the process may go on *ad infinitum*.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ *Or Adonai*, I, III, 1, p. 22 a. ‘No less a difficulty may be pointed out in the view of him who states that existence in all other beings is outside the essence to which the former is superadded as an accident. For if existence is an accident it must have a subject of inherence, and thus existence will have existence. If the other existence is also an accident, that, too, will require a subject of inherence and thus will have a still other existence, and so on to infinity.’

⁹⁷ This argument had been anticipated by many authors. Joseph Ben Judah, Ibn Aknin, a disciple of Maimonides, both raises and answers this objection (cf. *Drei Abhandlungen von Josef b. Jehuda*, von Moritz Löwy, Berlin, 1879, Hebrew text, p. 15):

ואם נאמר כאשר היה המיציאות תאר ^ללמוצאו הנה הוא תאר נמצא,
הנה הוא נמצא במציאות וכן יהוה זה המיציאות נמצא במציאות, וילך
הענין אל בלאי תכלית.

It is also found in Albalag's commentary on the *Intentions*, Metaphysics :
אם תאמר שהוא [כלומר, תאר המיציאות] נסוף, יתחייב שישיה
למציאות מציאות, ולמציאות מציאות, וכן עד בלאי תכלית.

The argument is also found in Aegidius's *De esse et essentia*, which had been translated into Hebrew at about the middle of the fourteenth century (Jews' College, London, 268) :

א"ב ציריך שבל דבר שישותו הוא דבר מטבע, יהיה לו הישות מודבר
אחר, ובעכבר שהישות, שהוא כולל דבר אחר, יובא אל אותו הישות שהוא
בעצמו, כמו שיבוא העלול למכה הריאונה, ציריך שישיה דבר אחר

If you say, as had been really suggested by Algazali, that existence, like Form, is an accident only in the general acceptation of the term, on account of its dependence upon essence, but again like Form it is a substance, and thus capable of self-subsistence, the question is, Why should existence be called accident any more than Form, since both, though accidents in the general sense of the term, are not accidents in its specific sense?⁹⁸ Thus, existence can be neither identical with the essence nor accidental to it.

Nor can unity be identical with or accidental to the essence. The arguments employed here by Crescas are merely a repetition of those employed by him in the case of existence. There is, however, one novel argument. Quoting the commonly accepted definition of unity as the negation of diversity, he continues: ‘and if we say that unity, signifying the absence of plurality, is identical with

שיהיה סבת הישות כל הנמצאים, בעבור שהוא ישות לב, ועל חכונה
אחרת היהת היליכה בטבות לבתי תכליות.

Likewise Gersonides urges the same argument against the accidentality of unity, which he says may also be applied to the accidentality of existence; cf. *Milhamot*, V, 12.

ועוד שם היה כל דבר אחר מצד מקרה מה נמצא בו, הנה יחויב
בזה המקרה כשהורינו עליו בשם בלתי נמר, שיהיה מתואדר בשווה אחד
מצד מקרה אחר נמצאנו בו, וכך אל לא תכליות . . . ולזאת הסבה
ג”ב נאמר שעצם כל דבר נמצא, ר”ל, שלא יורה הנמצא עליו מצד
מקרה נוסף על המהות.

⁹⁸ Furthermore, existence is like Form in its relation to Matter, since, according to their contention, without that accident [i.e. existence] the subject would have been nonexistent. And so, since that accident bestows existence and permanency upon the substance, it deserves to be called Substance prior to the subject, just as Form is called Substance prior to Matter, as it has been stated in the *Physics*, Book I. But existence is called by them accident, which is an incorrigible contradiction.’

the essence of the object predicated by one, it would follow that all objects described by one are one in essence'.⁹⁹ This argument may be easily identified as the application of the well-known mediaeval argument against the identity theory of universals as well as against monopsychism.¹⁰⁰

CHAPTER III

CRESCAS'S THEORY OF ATTRIBUTES.

IT would be comparatively easy and not altogether unjustifiable to dismiss Crescas's theory of attributes as a conglomeration of incongruous statements. Such, indeed, was the verdict passed upon it by an early critic.¹⁰¹ The difficulties which one encounters in the attempt to give a constructive presentation of his view are many. Besides the lack of coherence and definiteness in his exposition, Crescas seems radically to contradict himself. Starting out to prove that divine attributes are positive, upon getting embroiled in the inevitable difficulties consequent to such a thesis, without much ado Crescas quite unostentatiously concludes that after all some of the attributes are negative

⁹⁹ *Or Adonai*, I, III, 3, p. 22 b.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Gersonides, *Milhamot*, V, 12. 'For if unity were a genus it could not be predicated of the *differentiae* by which the species which are included under it are classified, for the genus cannot be predicated of the *differentiae* by which its subordinate species are classified. For example, animality is not predicate of rationality and volatility.'

שאם היה האחד סוג, היה בלתי אפשר שינשא האחד על ההבדלים אשר יחולקו בהם המינים אשר יקיף בהם, והמשל כי חיי לא ינשא על הדברו והעופפות.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Abraham Shalom's *Neveh Shalom*, XII, I, 3. 'It is surprising how that author changes his view in an instant.'

ומהפלא מזה החכם ומסברתו ההפוכה כמו רגע.

in meaning. If negativity is to be the ultimate solution of some of the attributes, it had been asked, why should it not be equally applied to all the attributes, and what is then the meaning of all his contentions against Maimonides?¹⁰² This inconsistency, however, is too apparent to be real, and the absence of any explanation on the part of the author of what appears to be an abrupt reversal of his own position, leads us at least to suspect whether his final statement does really reverse his original thesis. While we do not hold a brief for the author, defending him against his critics as to the adequacy of his justification of positive essential attributes, we shall, however, endeavour to give a constructive and consistent view of his attempt to do so.

If the problem of attributes, as I have attempted to show in the first chapter, is in its final analysis a question as to the relation of the universal essence to the individual; in order to understand Crescas's position on attributes we must first construct his theory of universals. Suggestions available for the construction of his theory of universals are abundant. He differs with both Avicenna and Averroes, and with the latter more than with the former. Admitting with Avicenna that the universal substance is distinct from the individual, he differs with him as to the relation between these two. According to Avicenna,

¹⁰² Cf. *ibid.*, XII, I, 4. ‘This author has just stated that existence means not nonexistence, and that unity means the absence of plurality. How then could he have said, just an instant before, that existence and unity are essential attributes?’

והנה החכם הזה הוא האומר שהמציאות יורה על היותו בלבד נעדך,
והאחדות על היותו בזולות רבוי, ואיך היה דעתו לשמה כרונע לומר
שהונמצאת והאחדת תארים עצימים.

while the universal does not exist apart from the individual, nor the individual apart from the universal, they can both at least be thought of as separate existences. But Crescas insists upon their mutual interdependence in thought. Differentiated in thought though they are, still in thought they are inseparable. Not only cannot rationality or animality be conceivable without the individual human essence, but likewise the individual human essence cannot be conceived without the universal conceptions of rationality and animality. Such 'essential universals', he says, are 'conditions' of the individual essences, not mere mental abstractions or inventions, but real entities, so united as not to be distinguishable except by thought; but they are also so mutually implicative as not to be thought of one without the other.

What essential universals, which form the definition, are to the individual essence of the defined object, all the attributes are to the divine essence, and they are positive. But before proceeding any further let us explain the special sense in which Crescas uses the term positive attribute. Positive attribute may mean two things. In the first place it means the existence of qualities distinct from the essence. In the second place, it means that any predicate affirmed of God is used in a sense not entirely unrelated to its original, ordinary meaning. In Hebrew the same word (*תְּכִיר*) is used in these two senses. In English, however, we may call the one 'attribute' and the other 'predicate'. Now, in the different theories of attributes which we have analysed in a previous chapter, the main controversy was not about the 'attributes', but rather about the 'predicates'. Both Maimonides and Gersonides admit that God does not possess any attributes distinct from His essence. Their

reasons, however, vary. The former maintains that in this respect God is absolutely different from other beings, whereas the latter believes that even in created beings essential universals are not distinguishable from the individual essence except in name. And so, while both deny the distinction of essence and 'attribute' within the divine substance, Maimonides interprets the 'predicates' as negatives, that is to say, as homonymous terms, but Gersonides interprets them as positives, that is to say, as ambiguous terms applied to God and to other beings in a related sense, *secundum prius et posterius*. Now, Crescas, as we shall see, endeavours to prove that attributes are positive both in the sense that the divine substance is composed of essence and attribute, and in the sense that the predicate affirmed of God is a related term. This, however, does not mean to say that every single attribute is positive in both these senses. If it can be shown that a certain attribute, even in its application to other beings, has no positive meaning, it can still be called positive predicate, because of its being applied to God and to other beings in a related sense. In the proposition *A* is *X*, for instance, let us say that *X* means — *Y*. If we then affirm that 'God is *X*', using here *X* in the same sense as in the proposition '*A* is *X*', we may then say that *X* in its application to God is a positive predicate, even though its meaning is negative. 'Positive' in this sense would not refer at all to the *positive content* of the term employed as the predicate of the proposition ; it would rather refer to the *positive relation* of the content of the term in its application to God, to the content of the same term in its application to other beings, the content itself being either positive or negative.

Of all the attributes, existence and unity stand out as

a class by themselves. They are to every individual essence what its essential universals by which it is defined are to it. Man, for instance, besides his two essential universals, animality and rationality, and his many adventitious qualities, has also the two attributes existence and unity, which like the former are inseparable from his essence. For existence and unity are conditions of thought, without which nothing is conceivable. 'Every essence must unconditionally have objective reality outside the mind',¹⁰³ which is the meaning of existence; and every such actually existent substance must be one and limited.¹⁰⁴

The relation that commonly obtains between the attributes of existence and unity and every individual essence, likewise holds true between both these attributes and the divine essence. As to the meaning of existence, however, there are two phases, a general and a specific. The general meaning is negative and invariable, but the specific meaning is positive and subject to variations. The general meaning of existence is non-subjectivity; that of unity is non-plurality. In that sense, each of these attributes is invariably applied, without any shade of difference, to accidents, substances, and God. The specific meaning of existence, however, is objectivity, and the specific meaning of unity is simplicity. In this positive phase each of these attributes is applied in different degrees to accidents, substances, and God. Substances are more objective than

¹⁰³ *Or Adonai*, I, III, 1, p. 22 a.

וְהַשְׁמָתָנָא הַמְהוֹת הַיוֹתוֹ נִמְצָא חַיִּים לְשָׁכָל.

and cf. quotation in note 105.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, I, III, 3, p. 22 b.

לֹלה הוּא מִבּוֹאֶר שָׁאֵן הַיּוֹדֵר . . . אֶלָּא דָבָר עַצְמִי לְכָל הַנִּמְצָא בְּפּוּעַל וּמוֹגָבֵל .

and cf. quotation in note 105.

accidents, since the latter have no reality except as part of the former. Likewise, substances are more simple than accidents, since the latter, again, are divisible not only by their own potentiality, but also by that of their subject of inhesion. And than both God is more real and more simple in a superlative degree.¹⁰⁵

All other attributes, however, that with respect to created beings are only accidental, differ in their application to God not only in degree but also in the manner of their relation to His essence, for all the divine attributes are inseparable and essential. Crescas especially mentions the attributes of Priority, Knowledge, and Power. Priority implies time, and time is an accident related to motion in all created being, and is subject to the variation of more or less. With respect to God, however, it is essential and

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, I, III, 1, p. 22 a. ‘It has thus been shown by an irrefutable argument that existence cannot be accidental to the essence. It must therefore be either identical with the essence itself or essential to it. Since it cannot be the essence itself, as it has been shown in the first argument, it must be essential to it, that is to say, that it is one of the conditions of the essence to exist outside the mind. Just as animality and rationality are said to be the human essence, so it is one of the conditions of the essence to have extra-mental existence. And so the term existence is applied univocally to all beings that are not prior to one another, that is, excluding accidents. Of substances and accidents, therefore, the term is applied ambiguously, since extramental existence is primarily applied to substance and through it subsequently to accidents. The general meaning, however, is that whatever is predicated by existence is not absent. It is in this sense of non-absence that the term is applied to God and to other substances, except that to God it is applied primarily and to other beings subsequently. It is thus clear that the term existence in its application to God and to other beings is not a perfect homonym, but it is a certain kind of ambiguity’ [i. e. *secundum prius et posterius*]. Cf. also *ibid.*, I, III, 1, p. 22 b. ‘It is thus clear that unity is not the essence itself nor anything added to the essence. It is something essential to everything that is actually existent and limited, and is a mental distinction with respect to the absence of plurality.’ Cf. *Hobot ha-Lebabot*, I, 8.

inseparable as if it were His definition. Furthermore, it is used in a superlative sense; thus acquiring the meaning of first, eternal, or rather that of uncreated. The same holds also true of Knowledge and Power. In created beings they are acquired and accidental; in God they are inseparably essential. Again, in created beings they are each in a limited degree, in God they are in the highest degree possible. Thus all the divine attributes are ambiguous, but not homonymous terms. While they differ from their ordinary usage in degree, or in both degree and relation to essence, they all share in common their primary meaning. Existence, unity, priority, knowledge, and power, in their application to God, are in their primary meaning related to the corresponding terms in their application to created beings.¹⁰⁶

But would not that relation imply similarity? Crescas tries to answer this question as follows: Related terms are similar, when the relation has some numerical value; that is to say, when the related terms are both finite. When one of the terms, however, is infinite, its relation to a finite term has no numerical value, and hence they are dissimilar. The divine attributes, as has been stated, are used in a superlative degree. His knowledge is infinite, and so are all his other attributes. Thus, while they are related in meaning to created attributes, their relation has no numerical value, whence it does not imply similarity.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Cf. *supra* quotations in note 105.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, I, III, 3, pp. 23 b-24 a. 'We say, there is no doubt that any similarity between God and His creatures must be dismissed as impossible. Still, though the perfection [attributed to God and to His creatures] belong to the same genus, there is no similarity between them, since they are so widely distinguished whether with respect to necessity and possibility of existence or with respect to finitude and infinity. This is the meaning

There is another difficulty which Crescas endeavours to obviate. ‘It is now imperative upon us’, he says, ‘to explain why the negation of essential attributes does not necessarily follow our acceptance of the proposition that everything that is composed of two elements cannot be necessary existence.’ This difficulty presents itself in two ways. First, since there are many attributes, each of which is distinct from all others, it would follow that the attribute part of God, which is not unidentical with but is inseparable from His essence, would have to be composite. Second, the aggregate of those attributes taken as a whole, being distinct from the divine essence, would together with that essence imply a plurality in the divine substance. With regard to the first, Crescas maintains that all the attributes are mental modifications of the single attribute of Goodness. Though not identical with goodness, all the other attributes cannot be separated from it even in thought. The relation, therefore, of the individual attributes to the general goodness is similar to that of the attribute as a whole to the essence.¹⁰⁸ It is this mental inseparability which makes

of the verse “To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto Him?” [Isa. 40. 18]. The prophet thereby explains that only that kind of similarity is forbidden to attribute to God which implies a certain comparison. But as the alleged similarity between God and His creatures is incomparable, for there can be no relation and also comparison between the infinite and the finite, there is no implication of real similarity in the affirmation of attributes.’

¹⁰⁸ That the relation of the individual attributes to Goodness is, according to Crescas, similar to the relation of Goodness, or the totality of attributes, to the essence, may be inferred from the following passage: ‘Just as essence cannot be conceived without existence nor existence without essence, so the attribute cannot be conceived without its subject nor the subject without its attribute. And all the attributes are likewise comprehended in absolute goodness, which is the sum total of all perfections’. *Or Adonai*, I, III, 3, p. 25 b.

them all one. In this, indeed, he follows Maimonides' explanation of the plurality of divine activities, with only the following two exceptions. Maimonides takes intelligence as the unifying principle, whereas Crescas takes goodness; and, again, Maimonides considers all other activities as different aspects of intelligence which are in reality identical with it, whereas Crescas considers the other attributes to be distinct from goodness. Upon the fundamental difference between intelligence and goodness more will be said later on.¹⁰⁹ With regard to the second, Crescas maintains that the mental distinction between essence and attribute is not contradictory to the conception of necessary existence, since they are inseparable in thought. Necessary existence excludes composition only in so far as that composition would necessitate an external agent by which that existence would have been rendered conditional. Such would be the case if the divine substance were conceived to consist of parts which could in any way be separately conceived of. But in the divine substance the attributes and the essence cannot be thought of one without the other, just as the essence and the radiative quality of a luminous object cannot be thought of separately. It is the possibility of being separately conceived and not the mere fact of a mental distinction that militates against necessary existence.¹¹⁰ This answer, however, concludes Crescas, must be resorted to only in the case of attributes whose primary meaning is positive, as, for instance, Power and Knowledge. There are some attri-

¹⁰⁹ In the chapters on Crescas's theory of Divine Omniscience and the Purpose of the Universe which are not included in this thesis.

¹¹⁰ This line of reasoning sounds like a modified and moderated restatement of Algazali's definition of absolute simplicity (cf. *supra*, chap. I, note 38 and chap. II, note 70).

butes whose positive meaning in the final analysis is nothing but a negation. The positive meaning of Existence, for instance, is nothing but a mental antithesis of absence; that of unity is a mental antithesis of plurality; that of priority when applied in a superlative sense of infinite priority comes to mean not-having-been-created, which is eternity, and in its final analysis, the absence of temporal relation. Though these attributes, too, are applied to God in the same positive sense as to created beings, their positive sense, however, in both cases is only a negation.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ *Or Adonai*, I, III, 3, p. 24 b. ‘It is now left for us to explain that the negation of essential attributes must not necessarily follow the accepted proposition which states that whatever is composite cannot have necessary existence. The explanation of this is not difficult, and it may be stated in two ways. First, though with respect to ourselves the attributes are separate, with respect to God they are unified. The infinite goodness which is essential to God comprehends all the attributes rendering them one. Second, that proposition is true only under a certain condition, namely, when the joined and composite object is such that it requires an agent to perform its composition as, for instance, when each part of the composition is part of its essence, in which case we must say that the composition brought about by the composing agent is the cause of the composite object. But the Blessed One has no divided substance, for His substance is simple in an absolute sense, and goodness in general follows from him essentially. Why, then, is it impossible that God should be necessary existence by His essence even though goodness in general or infinite knowledge, power, and the other perfections in particular, follow from Him essentially, just as light could have eradicated from a luminous object, even if that object were assumed to be necessary existence by its essence? Would the assumption of necessary existence render the radiation of the light impossible? No! For the light is not something essentially different from the substance of the luminous object, and thus does not require an external agent to bring about its composition with the latter; it is rather something essential to the luminous object and appropriately predicable thereof. That is exactly the meaning of divine attributes. So much the more the attribute *priority* which is a mental distinction of His not having been created, *existence* which is an indication of His

This would seem entirely to dispose of the negative interpretation of Attributes. The burden of authority, however, weighed heavily, and while Crescas dared disagree with Maimonides, for which there had been many precedents, he could not completely ignore the views of Ibn Gabirol, Judah Halevi, Bahya Ibn Pekudah, and others, all of whom had incorporated the negative interpretation in their respective solutions of the problem of attributes. To avoid this predicament, Crescas interprets the texts of those authors so as to harmonize with his own view. His interpretation is based upon the distinction we have already pointed out between the two usages of the Hebrew word **תְּכִיר**, one meaning 'attribute', the other 'predicate'. The existence of essential attributes in the divine being, says Crescas, had never been denied by the ancients. They had only maintained that some 'predicates' must be interpreted negatively, and those, too, only in the case when the predicates denote the essence itself. God, however, possesses essential attributes, and terms connoting those attributes are not to be taken as negatives. In the words of the author: 'We must, therefore, say that whenever some of the savants exclude the positive meaning of attributes, interpreting them all as negations, they must be understood to refer only to such predicates as describe the essence itself. These alone cannot be taken in a positive sense. And note this distinction.'¹¹²

Thus the divine being consists of an essence and essential attributes, the unity of the former being preserved by the

not being absent, and *unity* which indicates that there is no plurality in His essence and that in no way does He contain any duality.'

¹¹² *Or Adonai*, I, III, 4, p. 26a:

... וְלוֹהֶ צָדֵךְ שֶׁנָּאמַר שָׁם הִי קִצְתַּחֲכָמִים

mental inseparability of its parts. This view, says Crescas, is in conformity with the following statement which is found in the mystic writing called the Book of Creation. ‘The manner in which the flame is united with the coal is an illustration of the irruptible unity.’¹¹³ The implication of this statement, continues he, is as follows: ‘Just as essence cannot be conceived without existence nor existence without essence, so the attribute cannot be conceived without its subject nor the subject without its attribute; and all the attributes are comprehended in absolute goodness, which is the sum total of all perfections.’¹¹⁴ It is due to their failure to distinguish inseparable essential attributes from separable attributes that the philosophers, and especially Maimonides, were compelled to reject the existence of divine attributes altogether. To them only two alternatives presented themselves, either attributes are identical with the essence or they are different from it, in the latter case implying plurality. That attributes may be unidentical with the essence and still both together be one, they failed to perceive. A similar error was made by them in their theory of knowledge. Finding it impossible to conceive the subject, object, and process of knowing as different things, they were forced to declare them all identical—

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, I, III, 3, p. 25 b. The text of the *Sefer Yesira* is paraphrased by Crescas. Originally the passage reads as follows: ‘Their end [i. e. of the Ten Sefirot] is inserted in their beginning, and their beginning in their end, even as the flame is joined to the coal. Know, think, and imagine, that the Lord is one and the Creator is one, and there is no second to that oneness, and before one what number can you name?’

נעין סופן במחלתו, ומחלתו בסופן, כשלហבת קשורה בנהלת, דע
וחשוב וצור שארון יחיד והוא יציר אחר, ואין שני לו, ולפנוי אחד מה
אותה סופר ?

(cf. *Sefer Yesira*, Goldschmidt's edition, p. 51).

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

a view which is untenable for many reasons. But there, too, 'the philosophers tripped and fell because they did not distinguish the essential from the identical'.¹¹⁵ The *ens intelligens* is not identical with the *intellectus*, but is essential to and inseparable from it. Attributes are, therefore, positive, and have their real counterpart in the divine being. With this the knowability of God is no longer impossible. His essence, to be sure, can never be known; His essential attributes, however, can be comprehended.

While to Crescas the compatibility of essential attributes with absolute existence and unity seemed clear and indisputable, his position has not escaped cavilling criticism. It has indeed been charged to be open to the same objection that in his *Refutation of the Christian Principles*¹¹⁶ Crescas himself had pointed out in the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. The type of trinitarian doctrine which Crescas deals with in his polemic is, generally speaking, that of the Western Church, though as to its identification with any specific creed I am not in a position to express an opinion.¹¹⁷ He outlines it as follows. The divine substance or Godhead consists of one essence and three

¹¹⁵ *Or Adonai*, IV, 11, p. 91 a.

¹¹⁶ Cf. בטל עקרין הנזירים, originally written in Spanish, and translated into Hebrew by Joseph b. Shemtob.

¹¹⁷ Professor George Foot Moore was kind enough to make the following observation. 'The peculiar definition of the Christian theory of the Trinity which you find in Crescas is also to be found in Ramban's Disputation with the controvertite Pablo before King James of Aragon, in 1263, the text of which was printed by Wagenseil in a volume under the title *Tela Ignea Satanae*, 1681. The passage is near the end of the Disputation. Ramban gives for the three persons of the Trinity, החכמה והחפץ והיכולת רצון. I take that Crescas's *חפץ*, and Ramban's *חפץ* are equivalent, not to *voluntas*, but *benignitas*, or *caritas*, i. e. not "will" but "good-will". In this form, Power, Wisdom, Good-Will, we have the theory of the Trinity set forth by Abelard (died 1142), which was condemned by a synod at Soissons, in 1121.'

distinct personalities, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, corresponding respectively to the attributes of Power, Wisdom, and Will. The Personalities are not identical with the essence. The Personalities, furthermore, are distinct from each other, and are interrelated as cause and effect, the Father being the cause of the Son, and these two of the Holy Ghost. Again, the Personalities are the causes of their respectively corresponding three attributes. Finally, the three Personalities are co-equal, all of them being Gods.¹¹⁸ In his criticism, Crescas chiefly assails that part of the doctrine which maintains the distinctness of the Personalities from the essence, showing that conception to be at variance with divine unity.¹¹⁹ But according to the testimony of the translator, Isaac ben Shemtob, the same arguments that Crescas had urged against the distinctness of the Personalities were urged by others against his own theory of divine attributes. ‘I have noticed’, he says, ‘that some scholars had raised the same difficulties with respect to our author’s theory of divine attributes.’¹²⁰ The trans-

הפ’ הנו’ בשלוש. האמונה הנוצרית מנהת שהעצם האלקי יכלול על ¹¹⁸ נ’, תארים, פירשוניאש [persones] בלשונם, ומהות אחר: אב, בר, רוח הקדוש יכולת, חכמה, ורצון. האב מולד הבן, ומאהבת שניהם הרוחה”ק הוא נאצל, מהאב הוא היכולת מהבן הוא החכמה, מהרוח הרצון, והנו’ בmahootot אלה אל אחר, הם נבדלים אבל בדעותם. וכל אחד מהם הוא אלה. זאת היא אמונתם בזה העקר (*Ibid.*)

והעקר הנו’ הוא השלוש החקרמות המתחולפות נ’: א’, שהנוצרי ¹¹⁹ אומר שיש בעל יה’, נ’, תוארים נברלים, בלשונם פריסוניאש, והיהודי כופר בזה. ב’, שהנוצרי מאמין שיש באלו יה’ תאר נקרא בן נולד מאב, והיהודי כופר בזה. ג’, שהנוצרי מאמין שיש באלו יה’ תאר נאצל מהאב והבן נקרא רוח, והיהודי כופר בכל (*Ibid.*)

והזכירתי להעיר עליו, יعن כי ראייתי קצת משכילים ישבו על סברת ¹²⁰ זה החכם, בהאמינו התארים העצמיים, קצת מלאלה הבטולים (*Ibid.*)

lator, however, comes to Crescas's defence by pointing out a radical distinction between personalities and attributes, namely, that the former being causatively interrelated are necessarily many, whereas the latter are absolutely unified by absolute goodness.¹²¹

The abstruseness of Crescas's reconciliation of essential attributes with absolute unity has also been pointed out by Abraham Shalom in his *Dwelling of Peace*.¹²² 'We may ask the author [i. e. Crescas] as follows : Are there essential attributes identical with the essence or added to it? for these are the only two possible alternatives. If he says that they are identical, he has gained nothing by interpreting Moses' prayer to refer to essential attributes. . . . If he says that these attributes, though distinct with respect to ourselves, are one with respect to God, then it must mean that they are identical. . . . If the author retorts that the essential Attributes are indistinguishable from the essence except in thought, we may ask him again : Are they conceived in

אמר יוסף, דריש התאים עמוק מאד והרב הזה החזק ¹²¹
בהתאים העצמיים . . . אבלرأיו שתרע שהתקיים התאים העצמיים איןנו
תחת זה הסוג, ואנחנו לא מצאנו מלה אחרת יותר נאותה בהעתקה למלה
פריסונה זולת התאר. אבל אין מובנים אחד. וזה מבואר. שהם אמרו
שהאב המוליך הבן. מי שמניח שבו ית' יכולות וחכמה לא יחשוף חילתה
שהיכולה לפעול לחכמה, ולא שהיכולה אלוה, והחכמה אלה (*Ibid.*)

¹²² Cf. *Neveh Shalom*, XII, I, 3 :

נשאל' לחכם ונאמר, אם אלה התאים העצמיים הם עצמותו, אם הם
נוסף על עצמותו, שהוא חלופה הכרחות. אם יאמר שם עצמותו, א'ב לא
הרואה דבר בהניחו בקשת משה רビינו ע"ה התאים העצמיים . . . אם
יאמר שהתאים האלה, עם הווות נבדלים בחוקנו, הם מותאים בחוקו,
אם כן גם עצמותו ואם יענה זה החכם שהשנות הארווי העצמיים הם
בחינות שכליות, נשאלחו מאותם הבדיקות, האם יוכבנו בכח השכל היותם
עצמם או מקרה, ויישוב הספק הא' למקומו, ואין לדבר סוף.

thought to be essential or accidental? and thus we land again on the horns of our previous dilemma, and so we may go on asking and answering like that *ad infinitum*.¹²² The main point of this criticism, as it may be gathered, is that if things are one they must be identical, and if they are not identical they cannot be one. To take an object which is physically one, and call it two, because it is so conceived in thought, and then call it one again, because its parts are inseparable in thought, is past comprehension.

Another derogatory reference to Crescas's theory of attributes is found in Abrabanel's commentary on the *Moreh*. In his discussion of Attributes, Maimonides cites the view of a certain class of thinkers who had held that besides those attributes, which must be either identical with the essence or accidental to it, there are some which 'are neither His essence nor anything extraneous to his essence'. Dismissing this view as an utter absurdity, Maimonides remarks that 'it exists only in words, not in thought, much less in reality'; and that 'if a man were to examine for himself his own belief on the subject, he would see nothing but confusion and stupidity in an endeavour to prove the existence of things that do not exist, or to find a means between two opposites that have no means'. Commenting upon this passage, Abrabanel makes the statement that this view, which had been spurned by Maimonides, was afterwards taken up by Crescas.¹²³

The influence of Crescas's theory of divine attributes

¹²² Cf. Abrabanel's commentary on the *Moreh*, I, 51:

אחרי שבטל הרבה היות התארים עצמו... ולא שיהיו יוצאים מעצמו... זכר דעתך ג', שהוא אצל קצת המדברים, שאמרו שהתארים המתוארים בו ית' אינם עצמו ואינם מקרה יוצאה מעצמו, אבל הם דבריהם עצמים בו, וזה דעת הר' חסידי במ"א מספירו.

may be traced in the *Principles*¹²⁴ of his pupil Joseph Albo. Albo's theory of attributes is eclectic rather than systematic, and Crescas's view is partly adapted by him as a prerequisite of his conception of necessary existence. Necessary existence, according to Albo, implies four conditions: unity, incorporeality, timelessness, and deficiency;¹²⁵ a classification which, it must be observed, overlaps and could not stand the test of a logical analysis. The first of these conditions excludes separable attributes, both accidental and essential; the second excludes bodily emotions; the third, by inference, negates relation and similarity; the fourth rejects any implication of deficiency. Accordingly divine attributes are interpreted by Albo in the following ways: First, they are merely explanatory terms of necessary existence,¹²⁶ or what Maimonides calls 'names';¹²⁷ Second, they are negations.¹²⁸ Third, they are actions.¹²⁹ Fourth, they are external relations, these being admissible.¹³⁰ But by arguments not unlike those employed by Crescas he is compelled by force of the fourth condition of necessary existence, namely, deficiency, to omit the existence of essential positive attributes.¹³¹ The compatibility of such attributes with unity is explained by him in a way which is again reminiscent of that of Crescas's explanation. Attributes, he says, have two aspects, in one of which they appear as perfections, and in the other as imperfections. Imperfections they are when they are acquired and in any way separable from the essence. They are pure perfections when they are innate in the

¹²⁴ *Ikkarim.*

¹²⁵ Cf. II, 7.

¹²⁶ Cf. II, 6 and 21.

¹²⁷ Cf. *Moreh*, I, 61.

¹²⁸ Cf. *Ikkarim*, II, 10, 23, and 24.

¹²⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, II, 8.

¹³⁰ Cf. *ibid.*

¹³¹ Cf. *ibid.*, II, 21.

essence and inseparable from it. In God they are inseparable parts of His essence, and, therefore, they are pure perfections and likewise not subversive of His unity. That these pure perfections were not considered by him as identical with the essence, but rather essential to it, is quite clear from the context of his discussion, and that he was here consciously following Crescas may be inferred from his following conclusion: ‘Note this well’, he says, ‘for it is a correct and true interpretation, and one which had been adopted by conservative theologians both ancient and modern.’¹³² By ancient he undoubtedly refers to Saadia, and by modern he could not have meant anybody but Crescas, for Gersonides’ reputation was not that of a conservative.

Joseph Albo, however, is inconsistent. Having accepted Crescas’s explanation that inseparable attributes are not incompatible with divine unity, he rejects the same in the case of existence and unity. In a passage which has been entirely misunderstood by the Hebrew commentators he makes the following statement: ‘The meaning of existence in its application to all created beings is by some philosophers taken to be accidental, while by others it is taken as something essential.’ Now, the Hebrew commentators have understood this passage to refer to the Avicennean and the Averroesean controversy, ‘something essential’ thus meaning ‘something identical with the essence’.¹³³ This is, however, manifestly wrong. By ‘something essen-

¹³² Cf. *ibid.*

¹³³ Cf. *ibid.*, II, 1, and the commentary שרשיהם *ad loc.* The difficulties of this interpretation have been pointed out in a note (הנ”ח) which appears in the latest undated Wilna edition. The author of that note, too, has failed to see that Albo’s reference is to the controversy between Crescas and the Avicennean group rather than that between the latter and Averroes.

tial' he could not have referred to anything but Crescas's theory, which reference alone can be construed with the rest of the text. After thus stating Avicenna's and Crescas's views with regard to the meaning of existence in its ordinary application, Albo proceeds as follows: 'But the term existence in its application to God cannot be accidental, for God is not subject to accidents, as will be demonstrated in the ninth chapter of this part, nor can it be something essential and superadded to its essence, for in this case the divine being would consist of two elements, which is impossible, as will be brought out in the fifth chapter of this part. Consequently existence in the case of God cannot be anything but identical with His essence.' The implication of this passage is clear. Crescas's interpretation of existence as an essential and inseparable condition of essence is discarded by Albo on the ground of its conflict with unity. Albo thus reverses his own position on the other attributes.

In our analysis of Moses Halavi's theory of divine attributes in a previous chapter, we have shown that the attributes to him are mere inventions of the mind, and thus while he interprets divine predicates positively, he does not admit the existence of divine attributes. Yet Crescas endeavours to show that Halavi, too, had believed in the existence of essential attributes. He proves his point indirectly, as an inference of Halavi's theory as to the emanation of plurality from unity. In order to be able fully to understand and appraise the force of Crescas's reasoning, let us give a brief analysis of the nature of the problem of emanation.

Assuming as an axiomatic truth that God is absolute simplicity, and that a simple cause can generate only

a simple effect,¹³⁴ the question arises as to the origin of the plurality of elements that we observe in the universe. The answer to this question is based upon a combination of Plotinus's theory of emanation and Aristotle's theory of the spheres. There is God, the Absolute One, the Necessarily Existent, or by whatever other name He may be designated, whose knowledge of Himself, being a generative principle, produces the first intelligence. This Intelligence, says Alfarabi, consists of two generative elements, one due to its knowledge of God, and the other due to its knowledge of itself, the former producing the Second Intelligence, and the latter producing the outermost sphere.¹³⁵ Alfarabi's statement of the solution is correct in principle, but it is too general to account for the different elements of which the celestial spheres are supposed to be composed. For, according to the early Arabic philosophers, and Avicenna in particular, each sphere is composed, like the sublunar elements, of Matter and Form, and is endowed with a Soul, which is the efficient cause of its motion, and is presided over by an Intelligence, which is the final cause of the same. In Avicenna's statement of the solution, therefore, the self-knowledge of the First Intelligence is declared to contain as many elements as are necessary to explain all the component parts of the spheres. Avicenna's statement is variously reproduced in subsequent works. According to Sharastani, the reflection of the First Intelligence of his own spiritual essence produces the Form as well as the Soul of the First Sphere, the latter being

¹³⁴ As for the origin of this proposition, see Munk, *Mélanges*, p. 361; *Guide*, II, 22, p. 172, note 1; Steinschneider, *Al-Farabi*, p. 9, note 20;
* Kaufmann, *Attributenlehre*, p. 371, note 11.

¹³⁵ Cf. Alfarabi's *ספר ההתחלות הנמצאות*,
השניים . . . ישכיל הראשון וישכיל עצמותו.

nothing but the consummation of the former, whereas the existence of that Intelligence being mere possibility, produces the matter of the sphere.¹³⁶ Algazali's restatement of the case in his *Destruction of the Philosophers* is similar to that of Sharastani's, but, unlike the latter, he maintains that the self-knowledge of the First Intelligence would only account for the Soul of the Sphere, and consequently criticizes Avicenna for his failure to account for the origin of its Form.¹³⁷ In all these restatements, the origin of the Second Intelligence is said to be due, as is said by Alfarabi, to the reflection of the First Intelligence of God. In his *Intentions of the Philosophers*, however, Algazali gives a somewhat different and rather inadequate version of the case. The First Intelligence, he says, has two aspects. It is necessary existence in so far as it must come into being through its cause, but it is only possible existence when it is considered with respect to itself. Its necessary aspect, therefore, produces the Second Intelligence, whereas its possible aspect produces the First Sphere.¹³⁸ Abraham Ibn Daud, in his *Sublime Faith*, finds three elements in the First Intelligence, from which proceed the Second Intelligence, the First Sphere and its soul.¹³⁹ But curiously enough he does not state what these three elements are. Maimonides is probably following Alfarabi, naming only two elements in the First Intelligence, its knowledge of itself which produces the sphere and its knowledge of God which produces the Second Intelligence, and, like Algazali, he argues that this explanation does not account for the

¹³⁶ Cf. *Sharastani*, pp. 380-81 (Cureton's edition).

¹³⁷ Cf. Algazali's *Destruction of the Philosophers*, Disputation III.

¹³⁸ Cf. Algazali's *Intentions*, Metaphysics, V.

¹³⁹ Cf. *Emunah Ramah*, II, IV, 3.

component parts of the spheres.¹⁴⁰ Joseph Ibn Aknin, in his special treatise on the subject,¹⁴¹ finds in the First Intelligence three elements: knowledge of God, knowledge of self, and knowledge of its being mere possible existence. The restatement of the case in later Hebrew works are unimportant, as they all follow secondary Hebrew authorities.

It is significant that in all the statements cited the knowledge of God on the part of the First Intelligence is referred to as one of the component parts, the most important one, producing the Second Intelligence. None of these authors, however, specifies what is meant by that knowledge of God, though we may infer that what they meant by it is the knowledge that God is the cause of its existence, since the divine essence itself must be unknowable. Again, the least important element, that which produces the Matter of the Sphere, is designated by them *the mere possibility of existence*.¹⁴² Now, in Moses Halavi's enumeration of the threefold division in the First Intelligence, the first element is, as usual, called the *knowledge of God*,¹⁴³ but the third is described as *the knowledge of its being brought into being by the Necessarily Existent*,¹⁴⁴ which, of course, is another way of saying the *knowledge of its mere possible existence*. But in Crescas's paraphrase that expression is changed into *the knowledge of God as its cause and of itself as His effect*.¹⁴⁵ And so Crescas asks, what could Halavi have meant by

¹⁴⁰ Cf. *Moreh*, II, 22.

¹⁴¹ Edited and translated into English by J. L. Magnes (Berlin, 1904).

¹⁴² אָפְשָׁרוֹת הַמְצִיאוֹת.

¹⁴³ יַשְׁבֵּל מְחוּיֵב הַמְצִיאוֹת.

¹⁴⁴ יַשְׁבֵּל עֲצָמוֹתוֹ שֶׁהָאָרֶן עַלְלָל לְמְחוּיֵב הַמְצִיאוֹת.

¹⁴⁵ וְאֵם מָה שִׁישְׁגֵן הַיּוֹת עֲצָמוֹתוֹ יְהִי עַלְלהָ לוֹ וְהָאָרֶן עַלְלָל מִמְּנָה (Crescas's paraphrase, *Or Adonai*, I, III, 3, p. 25 b).

describing the first element as *knowledge of God*? The divine essence itself is unknowable. The comprehension of God as cause is in Crescas's paraphrase of Halavi exactly the phrase by which the third element is described. And to say that it refers to a negative knowledge of God is likewise impossible, since the negative knowledge of God is in its ultimate analysis the knowledge of His causality. Hence it must refer to the knowledge of God's essential attributes, which, concludes Crescas, goes to show that Moses Halavi admitted the existence of essential attributes. And in the same manner it can also be shown that Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes admitted the existence of the same. Averroes, to be sure, rejects the theory of intermediary emanations, believing that all the Intelligences and Spheres emanate directly from the divine essence. Still, contends Crescas, while denying the causal interrelation of the Intelligences, Averroes believes in the presence of some qualitative differentiation between them. That qualitative differentiation must, of course, be due to a corresponding gradation in the simplicity of their comprehension of God. But that comprehension cannot be of the divine essence itself; it must be of the divine attributes, which, therefore, have existence. But, as we have seen, while Averroes admits that the term Intelligence in its application to God is a positive predicate, he is far from believing that it is an essential attribute of God in the same sense as it is understood by Crescas.

Let us now summarize the results we have arrived at in our inquiry. The origin of the problem of attributes, we have stated, lies in the incompatibility of four initial assumptions: the logical interpretation of Scriptural

phraseology, the reality of logical relations, the anti-nominalistic view of universals, and the Avicennean definition of absolute simplicity. We have seen how the various attempts to solve the problem tended either to reject one or more of these assumptions, or to find some explanation in accordance with them. The naïve theologians, referred to by Maimonides, rejected the first assumption that the Scriptural predication are logical propositions. Maimonides retains all the four assumptions, and denying the existence of essential attributes in the divine being, interprets the Scriptural predication of God as privative judgements. Averroes, Gersonides, and Halavi, too, deny the existence of essential attributes in the divine being, but accepting of a nominalistic view of universals, and therewithal the non-reality of logical relations, interpret the Scriptural predication of God as positive judgements in which subject and predicate are only verbally related. Algazali's criticism of Avicenna aims to disqualify the latter's definition of absolute simplicity, and thereby affirms the existence of essential attributes. Finally, by advancing a new theory of universals, Crescas attempts to show the compatibility of essential attributes and absolute simplicity.